LIVELIHOOD IN SILWA

[Boys] [GIRLS] 857

FROM SEVEN TO TWELVE[1]

Before the introduction of compulsory schooling and perennial irrigation, the specific responsibility for this period was irrigation—he still helps with it in the afternoon.

Collects leaves, clover, grass, and weeds for feeding the animals, takes animals to water, as tending animals is his main responsibility, whether at home or in the field.

Fetches drinking water on donkey-back.

Helps in harvesting.

Helps in digging land, breaking up clods with the hoe as an introduction to his use of implements.

Takes out and leads his blind or old father or grandfather.

Takes corn on donkey-back to the mill to be ground.

Tasks of previous period if no younger sibling in the family.

Establishment of tasks of preceding period, and helping mother in food preparation.

Fetches water from the Nile in a larger jar, as towards end of this period she can balance the filled jar on head without support of hands. [312] [482] [231]

Takes midday meal to the field, and brings home dates and vegetables.

Helps mother in attending to poultry and sheep, searches for straying sheep or chicken outside. [23]

Daughters of widowed women, or men who are not actually engaged in farming, gather fuel from along the roads. [845] [312]

Brings home 'clay' from the Nile or the field to help mother in building or repairing the oven, the pigeon-cote the fireplace and the earthen store for seeds.

Carries corn on her head to the mill. [482]

FROM TWELVE TO SIXTEEN

883

Fertilizer-fetching is the main responsibility. Father is responsible for the work on the land, while son is responsible for carrying fertilizer from the hill.

Rears with special attention animals allocated to him: calf, small camel . . . as an investment for his marriage-payment.

Makes ropes by twisting fibre of the palm trunk.

'Sea' is one of her main responsibilities, which means water-fetching from Nile mainly at night. [341]

Occasionally takes women's washing as well as her own to be washed in the Nile [296]

Sieves flour, sews and cooks. [231]

Heats the oven, kneads and bakes. [422]

Hair-dressing. [515]

Wool spinning and yarning.

Makes plate and dish covers out of palm leaves, and dolls to ornament her future house. [283] [285]

Errand-going decreases to the minimum.

May get married before sixteen. [582]

[1] This is the period where compulsory schooling has interfered with the traditional activities of children. 871

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Silwa

LIVELIHOOD IN SILWA

FROM SIXTEEN ONWARDS

[Boys]	[Girls]
Beginning of responsibility with use of implements, e.g. plough, jarrafa, hoe, etc. . . .	All kinds of previously mentioned domestic work.
Responsibility in sowing, thinning out plants, and fertilizer distribution.	Complete seclusion, whether married or not.
Making 'maktafs', mats, panniers by plaiting palm leaves and sewing the plaits in the required shape.	

A concrete example of a sixteen-year-old boy's day of work, who has no brothers, is given in the following account:

'I am overworked, because there are no other "hands" to help me and my father in working on our land. I spend practically no time at home during the day as I am busy now fetching the fertilizer and have to rise at the crack of dawn, when the "muazzin" calls "Prayers are better than sleep". My mother packs bread and dates, and sometimes eggs, in a handkerchief for my breakfast on the way to the hills. I am then ready with my camel, either to call on my neighbours or to be called on by them for the "fajriah" – the dawn load. On our way to the hills we partake of our breakfast and sing songs on camelback. On our arrival at a good spot we make our camels kneel, and load the panniers, filling the "maktaf" with clay first, lifting it on the knee and emptying it into the panniers. The test for a good 'marrag' is to be able to do the lifting and emptying in a steady way, maintaining a balance in the loads. Then we make our camels rise, and, following them, we go on to the fields. After the first load, we go back for a reload called "dihawiah"—the full beginning of the day (about ten o'clock). Meanwhile, my father prepares grass for the camel, or engages in irrigating the land. After the second load, I take my midday meal at home, and go for a third load of fertilizer, called "asriah" (about three o'clock in the afternoon). If I don't go for the afternoon load, I help my father in distributing fertilizer for some time, then I would take the camel home, laden with grass, at sunset, whereas my father follows me later with the cow.

'Of course my work becomes easier when the fertilizer-fetching season finishes. I then can enjoy my tea in the morning, go to the field at broad daybreak, and attend to the feeding of the cow and the camel, or irrigate the land. In the evenings I am not too tired to have a chat with my friends after the evening meal, or to pay visits to my relatives.'

It is quite obvious from the preceding discussion that the welfare of the family depends largely on the labour potential it has at its disposal, and the harmonious distribution of that labour. One of the main features in the economic activities in the village is that immediately the younger child develops to the stage where he can take over the tasks carried on by an

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD

such a charm from the neck, the charm-case hanging under the right arm. I am told that a small piece of the placenta is sometimes used in this way instead of the cord, but so far I have not come across this usage myself.

Another method employed to prolong a child's life is the following. If a Muslim woman has had several children who have all died in early infancy, when another is born she asks a Coptic woman to give her *barakeh* (blessing, good luck), in order that the newly born child may live. The *barakeh* she asks for is either a part of a dress which has been worn by the Coptic woman or her husband, or else a dress which has belonged to one of their children. The dress *must* be that of a Christian, not of a Muslim. Among the Copts this custom does not exist. I asked why a Muslim should ask for the dress of a Christian, and I was told it was because they are good people.

A woman who has lost several children and wishes to ensure that the newly born infant will live acts as follows. She carries her baby in her arms, and, with a basket made of palm-leaves on her head,[1] goes from house to house begging for *haseneh* (charity) for her child. She will do this however rich she may be, behaving as if she were a very poor woman. Some people may give her money, others *battaw* or *khubz* (two kinds of bread) and other articles of food. She will then distribute these gifts among the poor people of the village, even if she be as poor as they. She believes that, as the result of this action, God, or her *karîneh*, will allow her to keep her child.

On many different occasions women have brought their babies to me with the request that I would spit into their mouths, in order to give them *barakeh* and make them live long! Also I found that many of my old clothes that I had thrown away were torn up, and small pieces of them given to various mothers in the village, who hung them on their babies as charms to prolong life. One expectant mother came and begged me to let her have one of my old frocks, in order that her child might be born on to it! She, poor thing, did not get her request granted, and I regret to say that her baby died very soon after birth!

Some women kill a puppy at the seventh month of their pregnancy. The puppy is killed over a cloth, on to which the blood flows. As soon as the child is born it is wrapped in this blood-

[1] The ordinary basket, called *mabjaf*.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Upper Egypt

attached a string of seven grains of beans and a little cotton bag containing a small quantity of the seven ingredients of one of the baskets (Fig. 37).

The midwife's fee consists of a large basket (Fig. 38) of maize, bread, dates, various nuts, and occasionally a little money.[1]

Some of the six various grains, together with the salt, are often given to the father to scatter over his fields. This is a fertility charm, and is believed to ensure his having good crops.

FIG. 38. MIDWIFE CARRYING HER WAGES ON HER HEAD

In addition to the charms mentioned above, the child sometimes has another one made of thick iron wire twisted into a particular shape (Fig. 37). This is also hung round the child's neck, but only so if, when it cries, it clenches its hands and shakes itself.

In some parts of Upper Egypt the following mixture is put into a child's eyes by the midwife on the seventh day. The woman brings an onion with her and squeezes the juice from it into a small coffee-cup, mixing with it salt, oil, and, usually, *koḥl* also. Then, taking a feather, she dips it into the mixture and, opening the child's eyes, brushes the feather right across them. It is believed that this will give the child wide open and beautiful eyes.

The naming of the child is part of the seventh-day ceremony. If the parents are anxious to discover the best and luckiest name for their offspring they proceed as follows. Candles, usually four

[1] Sometimes she is, I believe, paid only in grain.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Upper Egypt

are left on the ground to dry and harden in the sun. Every housewife is careful to see that she has always a plentiful supply of this fuel, which is neatly stacked in large quantities on the roofs of the houses.

Basket-making is a very large and important industry. Certain kinds of baskets are made in almost every village throughout the country, but a few types are characteristic of certain localities only. Many of the commoner kinds of baskets are strong and well made, but the finest work is to be found in the more southern provinces; indeed, the farther south one goes the better the workmanship. Baskets are made by both men and women, though I have found that in some localities this work tends to be monopolized by one of the sexes only; and one type of basket at least, so I was told, is made only by men. Baskets are constructed mostly out of date-palm leaves and the mid-ribs of palm-branches, but one variety in the south is made from the leaves of *dôm*-palms. These particular baskets are easily to be recognized by the shiny surface of the material employed in their manufacture.

FIG. 83. BUILDING A WALL

The commonest and one of the most useful baskets in general use is called the *makṭaf* (Fig. 83). It is used in field-work, for the

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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clearing away of rubbish, for removing *sibākh* (the earth obtained from ancient rubbish mounds, used as a fertilizer), and for the transport of grain; in it, moreover, a woman generally places the dry roots which she collects in the fields to bear home for fuel, and also the goods which she conveys to and from the market. A woman always carries this basket on her head (see p. 80, Fig. 38),

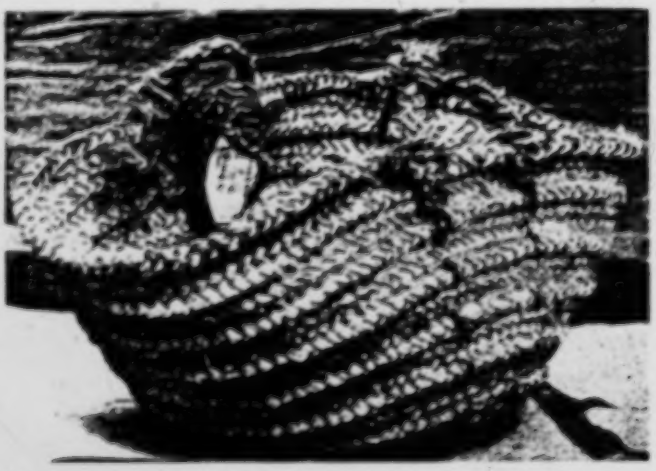

FIG. 83. A MAṢṬAF

the varied contents sometimes including even a small child (see p. 37, Fig. 14).

The habit of carrying their burdens on their heads gives the women their wonderful poise. The heaviest loads are thus carried with apparently the greatest ease. For example, the large water-jars, filled to the brim, are conveyed home in this way by the women without any support from their hands, and without a drop of the contents being spilled (see p. 41, Fig. 16).

Children begin to carry burdens in this way at a very early age, smaller jars, and perhaps somewhat smaller baskets, being used by them. If the heads of the female Egyptian peasants were systematically measured it might be shown that this method of carrying heavy weights from early childhood has made a definite impression on the shape of the skulls, those of the women being possibly much flatter on the top than those of the men. I do not

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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know if any physical anthropologist has discovered this peculiarity in the head-form of Egyptian women or not.

The *maḳṭaf* is made, as I have said, of palm-leaves. These are torn off the main stem and split into the desired width, and are then woven into a very long plait. Extra leaves are constantly incorporated, till the necessary length is completed. Any very narrow

FIG. 84. SEWING THE PLAIT INTO A SPIRAL

strands left over as useless for this purpose are carefully put on one side, to be utilized in the following manner. When the plait is completed the basket-maker takes these strands and forms them into a cord by twisting them together between the palms of his hands. He then takes a large iron needle, which he threads with this cord, and proceeds to form the basket by sewing the plait into a spiral. The cord is inserted through the plait in such a way that it forms a thick spiral rib round the basket (Figs. 84 and 86). The work is often so cleverly done that, unless one has witnessed the whole process, it is exceedingly difficult to discover how the basket has been made. Two rope handles are attached to each basket (Fig. 83), the rim of which is often strengthened with the

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Upper Egypt
Egyptian Oases MR12

F 285

same material, any ends that remain over being laced into the sides of the basket below either handle. The base of the basket on the outside is also sometimes reinforced with cord coils.

E 285

I should mention that a basket in my possession, from the oasis of el-Farāfreh, displays the same technique as the *maḳṭaf*. It is of very fine workmanship and the plaits are very small.

F 285 915 [460]

FIG. 85. BASKET-GRANARIES

A similar technique is employed in the making of basket-granaries. These are of great size, and are made, so I was told, exclusively by men and, so far as I know, in Fayūm Province only; I have never, as yet, come across them elsewhere. Numbers of them are sold at the weekly markets, and their size may be estimated by comparison with the height of the people standing near them in the photograph (Fig. 85). I have frequently seen these basket-granaries on the roofs of houses in Fayūm. Sometimes they are quite globular in shape and are entirely covered with clay, this being done, so one of my servants told me, to keep the wind and dust from penetrating through the interstices. Only when small pieces of clay have fallen off is the original structure of basket-work revealed. All the basket-granaries that I have seen are extremely well made, and are very strong.

F 285

Many baskets in use all over Egypt are made in the follow-

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Upper Egypt

ing way, the materials employed being taken from the palm-tree.

A number of the mid-ribs of palm-branches are split up lengthways, the leaves likewise. The basket-maker takes a certain number of the split mid-ribs, the number varying according to the required thickness of the coil, these forming a foundation. An iron needle, somewhat more slender than that used for the plaited baskets, is threaded with one of the split leaves, which is sewn over and over the foundation, almost, if not quite, concealing it. This type of basket is again built up spirally, each stitch being passed through the preceding coil (Figs. 86 and 87). Such baskets are made in a large variety of shapes, from flat, round trays to large receptacles with lids. They are often decorated with simple designs in colours, the leaves being, of course, dyed before they are sewn into the baskets.

FIG. 86. UNFINISHED BASKETS, SHOWING METHODS OF WORKING

FIG. 87. BASKET WITH OPEN WAVY-LINE PATTERN

Some baskets, which I was told are made only in two small villages in Fayûm Province, have the base made in the way described above, while the sides show an open wavy-line pattern (Fig. 87). These also are made in a large variety of sizes and shapes, and are very attractive and decorative. The wavy line consists of mid-rib foundations closely bound round with the leaves. It must be remembered that both the leaves and the mid-ribs are fresh when the baskets are made, and are

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Upper Egypt
Siwans MR14

F 285

therefore pliable enough to be bent into whatever shape the basket-maker desires.

F 085 463 441

In one very small village in Fayūm I found a large number of people engaged in this industry. There is also a basket-merchant in this village, and his trade extends all over the country. He informed me that he sent large consignments of baskets abroad, even, he declared, to England, but I am not in a position to be able to verify his statement. I bought a certain number of baskets

FIG. 88. BASKET-MAKERS IN A SMALL VILLAGE IN FAYŪM

S [285]

from him, including one which, he said, had come from the oasis of Sīweh. This basket, the workmanship of which is very superior, is to be seen in the adjacent illustration on the right (Fig. 89).

F 285 415

Baskets of the variety called *ḳafaṣ* (plural *akfāṣ*) (Fig. 90) are used as temporary cages for fowls, pigeons, rabbits, and so on. Oranges and other fruits may also be packed in these baskets, as well as household utensils. In the manufacture of these baskets,

F [060]

which are made of the mid-ribs of palm-branches only, men are more usually employed than women. The baskets can be made very strong, and therefore may be used for carrying heavy weights. Vertical lengths of mid-rib are inserted into holes pierced through horizontal bars of the same material forming the four sides; no

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Upper Egypt
Siwans MR14

F 285 415

nails or fastenings of any kind are used. The lid is made in a similar way. I always have my kitchen utensils and stores packed in such baskets when travelling from village to village, as they have the advantage of being light in weight as well as durable.

Beds, chairs, and small tables are made of the same material and in a similar way to the *kafaṣ*.

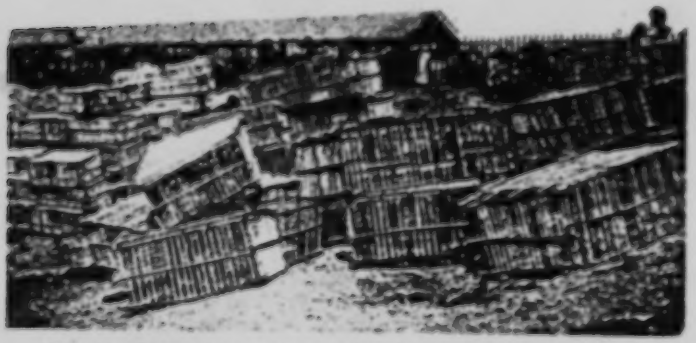
Native rope is usually made out of the fibre of the palm-trunk (*lif*). The *lif* is picked over and torn into strips, which are twisted into a cord between the palms of the hands (Fig. 91 and Frontispiece). There is a large rope-making industry in Fayūm Province, and the ropes made in this village are traded over a large area.

F 352
F 083
S [085]

FIG. 89. VARIOUS BASKETS: TRAY (AT BACK), FRUIT-BASKET (IN CENTRE), BASKET FROM SĪWEH (ON RIGHT)

Strong woollen cloth is woven in a great many villages, but the weaving of finer materials, such as silk, is mostly

F 286 344



F [085 410]

FIG. 90. BASKETS OF PALM-RIBS (AKFĀṢ) FOR SALE IN A MARKET

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13 -
Upper Egypt

AGRICULTURE AND HARVEST RITES

The corn is cut with a primitive sickle (Fig. 101), and is immediately tied up into small sheaves, which are carried to the threshing-floor on the backs of camels (Fig. 102). The threshing-floor is usually a bare place near the fields, and here the corn is piled up in great heaps.

The threshing is done with a sledge-like machine, called *nôrag*, drawn by oxen. It consists of a wooden frame, on which the driver sits, and solid iron wheels which are passed over and over the corn, breaking up the stalks and separating the grain from the husks (Fig. 103). The broken stalks are collected and packed into net sacks, which are carried off on the backs of donkeys (Fig. 104). The grain, which is, of course, still mixed up with chaff, is piled up in heaps ready for winnowing. This takes place out of doors, the grain being thrown up into the air with a large wooden fork or a wooden spade (Fig. 105). The wind carries off the chaff, the grain falling below in a heap (Fig. 106). A second process is necessary in order to clear the grain entirely of chaff, and so it is carefully sifted in large sieves. The grain is then piled up into heaps, over which palm-branches are sometimes placed to prevent the wind from blowing any of it away. The heaps are left standing all night, and late in the evening it is customary for the owner to place flat, round loaves of bread among the grain, these loaves being the perquisite of the man who, on the following morning, carries it to the owner's granaries.

FIG. 99. TWO 'BRIDES OF THE CORN,' THE UPPER ONE NEW, THE LOWER SOME YEARS OLD

The granaries are usually situated on the roofs of houses, and are made of clay or basket-work.[1]

It is the custom to pay all the harvesters in kind (Fig. 107), and

[1] See pp. 133 f., 138.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Upper Egypt
Ancient Egypt MR5

may have been referring to the way in which cow-dung is made into cakes for fuel (p. 154) when he says:[1] "They take up dung with their hands."

Baskets of the same shape and same technique as the *maḳṭaf* (p. 156, Fig. 83) were made anciently, as can be seen from the photograph of such a basket found at el-'Amarneh (Fig. 174), and dating therefore from the Eighteenth Dynasty. Such baskets are constantly depicted in reliefs and paintings from the Third Dynasty onward, often as being carried, as at the present day, on the heads of the women.[2] Baskets of much the same shape and of the same technique as the Eighteenth-Dynasty baskets shown in Fig. 175 are woven at the present day (p. 159)—*i.e.*, they are made of palm-leaf with a foundation of split midribs and built up spirally with over-sewing.[3] In el-'Amarneh was found a basket tray[4] that is almost an exact replica of that depicted in Fig. 89, p. 161, while the two baskets, the one ancient and the other modern, shown together (Fig. 176) are also practically identical.

FIG. 174. ANCIENT MAḲṬAF
After T. E. Peet and C. L. Woolley, *The City of Akhenaten*, Part I, Pl. XXI, 4.

The *ḳafaṣ* (p. 160) was as much employed anciently as it is now, and is frequently shown in the ancient reliefs and paintings.[5] A bed made like a *ḳafaṣ*, and somewhat similar to that mentioned on p. 161, may be depicted in the Third-Dynasty tomb-chapel of Ḥesy.[6]

Palm-fibre rope like that in use at the present day (see p. 161 and Frontispiece) has been found in tombs of all periods.[7]

[1] ii, 36.
[2] See above, p. 299, and *cf.* p. 37, Fig. 14, p. 80, Fig. 38.
[3] See also W. M. F. Petrie, *Tarkhan*, Part I, Pl. X, 1.
[4] T. E. Peet and C. L. Woolley, *op. cit.*, Pl. XXI, 3.
[5] *E.g.*, P. E. Newberry, *El-Bersheh* (London, 1893), Part I, Pl. XXII.
[6] W. E. Quibell, *Excavations at Saqqara, 1911–12: The Tomb of Hesy* (Cairo, 1913), p. 29 and Pl. XIX.
[7] See, *e.g.*, W. M. F. Petrie, *Deshasheh* (London, 1898), p. 33 and Pl. XXXIV.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt
Ancient Egypt MR5
Graeco-Roman Egypt MR4

and from the excavations of the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft at el-'Amarneh.[1] The shifting of the boundary-stone (pp. 169f.) is condemned in *The Teaching of Amenōphis, the Son of Kanakht*.[2]

FIG. 176. A MODERN (LEFT) AND ANCIENT (RIGHT) BASKET
The latter after H. E. Winlock, *Bulletin of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York*, Part II (December, 1922), p. 35, Fig. 24.

The modern plough (p. 170 and Fig. 97) is almost exactly like the ancient one (see Fig. 178).[3] For a drawing of an ancient plough reconstructed from still surviving portions see Fig. 179. Dr Borchardt thinks that the ancient like the modern plough was furnished with a metal share. Accordingly the wooden share in Fig. 179 is represented as sheathed in metal. Dr B. P. Grenfell told my brother that the blade of the *ṭūriyeh* (hoe) had acquired its present shape, and was already made of iron, by Roman times, for he had found such blades in rubbish mounds of the Roman period.

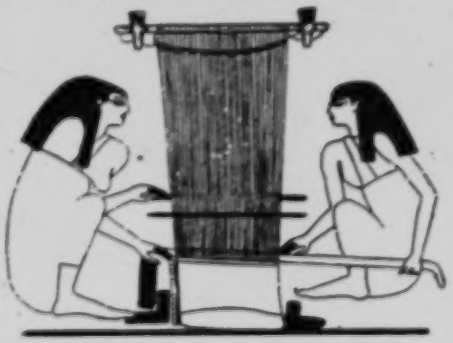

FIG. 177. TWO WOMEN WEAVING ON A HORIZONTAL LOOM
After F. Cailliaud, *Recherches sur les arts et les métiers*, Pl. 17A.

The modern *shādūf* (pp. 170 f.) finds its exact counterpart in

[1] *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft zu Berlin*, vol. l, p. 17. For a photograph showing a modern cultivated patch of ground so divided, see G. Steindorff, *Die Blütezeit des Pharaonenreichs* (Leipzig, 1926), Fig. 54.

[2] F. Ll. Griffith, *Journal of Egyptian Archæology*, vol. xii, p. 204.

[3] A. Erman and H. Ranke, *op. cit.*, Pl. 35; A. Erman, *Life in Ancient Egypt*, translated by H. M. Tirard (London, 1894), p. 426; J. G. Wilkinson, *The Ancient Egyptians*, vol. i, p. 281; L. Borchardt, *Priestergräber . . . vom Totentempel des*